

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the depolymerization of hot water-coagulable cellulose ethers by hydrolytic degradation by means of acids, wherein the degradation is carried out at a temperature above the cloud point of the cellulose ether as concentrated aqueous slurry, and in addition at least one oxidizing agent is added to the concentrated aqueous slurry in an amount of between 0.05 and 5% by weight based on the cellulose ether, before, during and/or after the depolymerization in acidic or neutral medium.
2. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein methyl-, ethyl-, propyl-, hydroxyethyl methyl-, hydroxypropylmethyl-, ethylhydroxyethyl- or ethylmethylcellulose is employed as cellulose ether.
3. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the degraded cellulose ether has a Höppler viscosity, measured as 2.0% solution (absolutely dry) in water at 20°C, of \leq 50 mPas.
4. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein mineral acids and/or organic acids are employed as acids.
5. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 4, wherein hydrochloric, sulfuric, nitric and/or phosphoric acids are employed as mineral acids.
6. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ratio of water to cellulose ether does not exceed 10:1 by weight.
7. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein peroxy compounds, perborates, sodium chlorite, halogens and/or halogen oxides are employed as the at least one oxidizing agent.
8. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 7, wherein hydrogen peroxide

is employed as the at least one oxidizing agent.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein after the depolymerization, the degraded cellulose ether is washed with at least one aqueous solution of a basic salt at a temperature above the cloud point of the degraded cellulose ether in order to adjust the aqueous solution of the degraded cellulose ether to a pH in the range from 5.5 to 8.0.

11. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 10, wherein sodium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium sulfate and/or sodium bisulfate is employed as the salt.

12. - 18. (Canceled)

19. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the degraded cellulose ether has a Höppler viscosity, measured as 2.0% solution (absolutely dry) in water at 20°C, of \leq 5 mPas.

20. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 4, wherein trifluoroacetic acid, acetic acid, formic acid, oxalic acid, phthalic acid, maleic acid benzoic acid or mixtures thereof are employed as organic acids.

21. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the hydrolytic degradation is carried out at a temperature of from 70 °C to 105 °C.